SPECIAL REPORT

THE PLIGHT OF MIDDLE EAST CHRISTIANS

SURGE IN ANTI-SEMITISM
BUT ALSO IN ALIYAH

ISRAEL BUYER'S GUIDE
Dear Friends,

“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17).

This summer those of us living in Israel were again reminded that this nation is still living in a very hostile neighborhood. Yet, while thousands of Hamas rockets were fired at Israel from Gaza, we again witnessed God’s hand of protection over His people. The damage in Israel was miraculously minimal!

This was due not only to the success of Israel’s new “Iron Dome” missile defense system, but on many occasions strong wind gusts drove rockets into the Mediterranean Sea, and hundreds of times Hamas rockets fell short inside Gaza. When asked why they could not aim their rockets more effectively, a Hamas terrorist replied, “We do aim them, but their God changes their path in mid-air.”

In the midst of all this terror, we sponsored weekend respites and day trips for hundreds of Israeli families from embattled towns near Gaza to have times of rest in Jerusalem, at the Dead Sea, and in the Galilee. We also were able to deliver ten new portable bomb shelters to targeted communities, mostly in the vicinity of the Gaza border. One such shelter was donated to the Bedouin village of Umm Batim, close to Beersheva – marking the first time a Bedouin town in the Negev had a bomb shelter.

In addition, we are currently working with Arab pastors to help Arab Christian believers affected by the war in Gaza.

We were surprised and blessed to recently receive a personal letter from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu thanking us for the Christian Embassy’s support during the recent crisis. This letter of gratitude applies to all of you who stand with the ICEJ in your prayers and financial support. It means your voice is being heard here in Israel.

Moving on from this conflict, we now are looking forward to an exciting Feast of Tabernacles in the brand new Pais Arena in Jerusalem this month. We encourage you to begin making plans to join us for the Feast next year. Your presence at the Feast is a great encouragement to the people of Israel.

Yours in Christ,

Dr. Jürgen Bühler
ICEJ Executive Director

COVER PHOTO:
A Chaldean Christian from Iraq at a recent protest against Islamic violence.

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NEXT ISSUE
COMING UP IN THE NEXT WORD FROM JERUSALEM

Our November issue will feature a review of our 2014 Feast of Tabernacles celebration in the new Jerusalem Pais Arena. We’ll have highlights and photos from this year’s Sukkot gathering. Also look for great biblical teachings from our Feast speakers from around the world.

Learn more at http://feast.icej.org
The biggest revelation from the recent conflict in Gaza was not the extent of the Hamas tunnels into Israel, nor the willingness of Hamas to sacrifice their own people, but the deep rift running through the Arab world today – which could portend major changes in the region.

Israel’s New Allies
Until recently, the Arab world presented itself as a united bloc, particularly when condemning Israel for Palestinian suffering and even for Arab misery in general.

However, this large bloc is disintegrating with surprising speed. Regional powers like Turkey, Qatar, and Sudan continue to bash Israel, but Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and especially Egypt have shown a new cooperative spirit with Israel.

A recent study by Khaled Abu Toameh for the Gatestone Institute noted many Arabic press reports voiced support for Israel’s military operation against Hamas. Egyptian Foreign Minister Sami Shukri squarely blamed Hamas for the mounting Palestinian casualties after it rejected Cairo’s original truce terms. A leading Egyptian commentator concurred that Hamas was responsible for Palestinian losses.

Others described Hamas’ rocket attacks on Israel as “idiotic” while criticizing Hamas leaders in Doha for living in luxury as their people suffered. Another commentator, Azza Sami, wrote in Al-Ahram: “Thank you Netanyahu and may God give us more people like you to destroy Hamas.”

It is true that the historic rift between Sunni and Shi’ite Islam has often led to conflict. But their common hatred of Israel unified the Arabs. Yet today, Israeli officials are surprised by the realignment of Arab rulers opposed to radical Islamicists – whether Sunni or Shi’ite – with Jerusalem.

“Who would have ever thought that Saudi Arabia and Egypt would be our allies in our struggle with Hamas?” a senior Israeli official recently told me.

Arab Spring Revisited
This realignment can be seen on other fronts. Syria and Iraq are being torn apart by rival rebel groups fighting the regimes and one another. The most notorious is ISIS, which is slaughtering countless Christians as well as fellow Muslims who do not share their repressive ideology.
In many ways, the major reshuffle underway in the Middle East was triggered by the Arab Spring ignited in Tunisia in late 2010. Yet this hopeful “Spring” quickly turned into an “Arab Winter” when Egypt voted into power the radical Muslim Brotherhood. Then two years later, an estimated 15 million people (some claim 30 million) took to the streets of Cairo and other Egyptian cities to demand the end of Brotherhood rule. It is considered the largest political protest in human history.

This prompted not only a turn towards a more moderate government in Egypt, but it also had a ripple effect across the Arab world. Just a few weeks ago, a prominent Saudi commentator wrote that the Egyptian protestors, rejecting radical Islam, spoke not only for Egypt, “but they represent the entire Arab world.”

The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the atrocities by ISIS in Syria and Iraq have triggered something which 9/11 and other acts of Islamic terrorism abroad could never achieve – an Arab backlash against radical Islam.

After the mass terror attacks in Manhattan, Madrid, and London, most Arabs were silent regarding these violent acts against the “decadent” West. But, the sceptre of the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS, and al-Qaeda has more and more Muslims today realizing that Islamic extremists cannot offer any hope to the Arab world.

The Financial Times recently observed that the Arab world is starting to shake off its “long state of denial,” and religious scholars and ordinary people now ask: “What is wrong with us?”

It is a fact that the Arab bloc is one of the most underdeveloped regions in our world today. Four consecutive UN development reports on the Arab states found they have the highest rates of illiteracy and greatest lack of basic rights and freedoms worldwide. For decades, the incredible Arab oil wealth did not go into education, science, research, or development, but instead produced a society of consumerism reliant on Western imports.

**The Arab Millennials**

In addition, today’s youth have become a significant force in Arab affairs. In his book *The New Arabs*, journalist Juan Cole describes how the millennial generation is changing the Middle East. These youths have greater access to information than their parents. Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are used to recruit new jihadists for ISIS, but they also give Arab Millennials a window into the free world as never before. Young people helped ignite the Arab Spring four years ago, and later unseated the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo.

Their voice can even be heard in a recent manifesto released by Gazan youths, saying: “We have enough of the bearded men on our streets who want to force us what to think and how to dress.”

**The Last Giant Falling**

Meanwhile, for the first time in Islam’s 1300 years of dominance in the Middle East we see large numbers of people turning to Christ. While ISIS is spreading terror, Arab pastors report unprecedented growth despite the fierce persecution. A decade before the Arab Spring, *Operation World*, a prayer guide for the nations, already reported historic church growth in almost all Muslim states, a trend that has only increased.

I remember well in the 1980s when global leaders like Loren Cunningham and David Pawson came to Germany and prophesied the fall of Communism and reuniting of Germany. Some German pastors ridiculed them, as it was the height of the Cold War. But, in 1989, everything changed; Communism fell and Germany soon reunified.

I also remember another message from those meetings: “The last giant which will fall after Communism is the giant of Islam.” I personally believe we are seeing today the slow collapse of the stronghold of Islam, which for centuries kept people from freely choosing their religion. It may not mean the end of Islam altogether, but the release of multitudes from a demonic bondage that held them far too long. Communism did not disappear after 1989, but what was removed was its evil, totalitarian control over people.

A region, which for generations seemed impenetrable, is becoming a house divided. Jesus declared: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand” (Matthew 12:25).

Communism enslaved Eastern Europe for 70 years, while Islam has gripped the Middle East for over 13 centuries. Therefore, change in this region might take longer and be more violent.

Yet the signs of Islam’s decline should not surprise us. For decades, Christians have prayed for revival in the 10/40 window. We need to remind ourselves that we serve a prayer-answering God.

Therefore, let us continue to pray for Israel while also recognizing God loves the Arabs and beckons us to pray for them, too. He wants Arabs to be saved!

The origins of the Arab nations go back to Ishmael, son of Abraham and half-brother of Isaac. While God clearly sealed His covenant with the descendants of Isaac, Abraham also pleaded, “Oh that Ishmael might live before you!” (Genesis 17:17). And God answered:

“I will establish My covenant with him [Isaac] for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation” (Genesis 17:19–20).

The time of blessing for Ishmael seems closer than ever.

Years ago, Rabbi Benny Elon strongly challenged me, “Jürgen, please tell the churches to send more missionaries into the Islamic world.”

I asked him why, as rabbis normally are not very fond of missionaries. He replied, “If the Arabs believe what you believe, then we will have peace in the Middle East.”

May this day come soon! 🙏
TODAY'S SPIRITUAL BATTLES

BY REV. JUHA KETOLA
ICEJ INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR

"We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

During the recent conflict in Gaza, I had visitors coming from abroad to see me in Jerusalem. They were arriving late at Ben-Gurion Airport, so while waiting at home I decided to watch the latest news on TV and the Web.

For several hours, I flipped through different TV news channels and opened my laptop to Israeli news sites. After this massive wave of reports, images, and analysis of current events worldwide, I stopped to think.

The Evil Behind the Scenes
The news media had covered the ISIS terror militia in Iraq, clashes in Libya, Hamas rockets in Gaza, hurricanes, earthquakes, and the Ebola virus in Africa. Beyond these events, I also thought how terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and al-Shabaab in Somalia add to the chaos and human suffering in our world.

Then I heard the words of Jesus echoing: "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars ... there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places ... look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" (Matthew 24:6-7; Luke 21:28).

The stage is slowly being set for King Jesus to return from heaven and deliver us from all evil!

But, I could see as well, how behind all this senseless violence by evil men in so many places, was the influence of evil spirits, led by Satan himself!

Works of the Devil
Satan is no friend! He is the enemy of all humanity. Not only is he the father of all lies, but according to Jesus he is also a murderer who comes only to steal, kill and destroy (John 8:44; 10:10). Unfortunately, we see his works all around.

Even though suffering in this life remains a mystery, the Bible is clear on this: Satan and his evil spirits can impact world events through the minds and actions of those
people who agree with him (Ephesians 2:1-3). They are inspired and draw their power from evil sources. As a result, humanity is suffering, in confusion, and filled with hatred, fears, and hopelessness.

**Christian Suffering in the Middle East**

It is painful to see the consequences of evil spirits ruling the lives of men. One sad expression of this murderous spirit at present is the hatred of Muslim extremists towards Christians in the Middle East. Even while I am writing this, ISIS is beheading, crucifying, slaughtering, and persecuting Christians by the thousands in Syria and Iraq.

Three hundred thousand Iraqi Christians have fled ISIS’ brutality this summer. They were given four stark choices: convert to Islam, pay the jizya tax, flee, or be murdered.

Hamas also constantly persecutes and threatens the small flock of Christians in Gaza.

What is it like to be a follower of Jesus in today’s Iraq, Syria, Gaza, or other areas under Islamic rule? We really need to stop and think about it!

**At Ease in the West**

In our civilized Western societies, Christians are not being beheaded. Instead, it is relatively easy to follow Jesus. If any persecution comes, it is usually only verbal, or we may be shunned at work, or our career advancement hindered. But, this is not the case in the Middle East, where Israel is the only true democracy that protects religious freedoms.

It is obvious that the spirit behind Islam is not the same as the Holy Spirit working in our lives. No, it is a spirit of anti-Christ, which wants Christians to submit as slaves under the rule of Islam. And this evil spirit is at physical war against Christians, wanting to eradicate them not only from the Middle East, but from all the earth!

**Hope in Christ**

However, we, as followers of Jesus, do not wage war against flesh and blood; that is, against human beings. We discern the spirit behind the evil deeds of men, and honor everyone as created in the image of God.

Our message is one of forgiveness and reconciliation in Jesus. That is, reconciliation first with God, and then between men of different religious, cultural, ideological, and ethnic backgrounds. The Gospel has the power to change lives. It is the message of hope for all peoples and cultures.

The character of God and fruit of the Spirit revealed in the person of Jesus is available for all men (Hebrews 1:3; Galatians 5:22-23; Colossians 3:12-15; 1 Timothy 3:16)! Our weapons are spiritual and hope-filled. Their origins are in the goodness of God and they bring healing and truth to human hearts.

"**AND YOU WILL HEAR OF WARS AND RUMORS OF WARS . . . THERE WILL BE FAMINES, PESTILENCES, AND EARTHQUAKES IN VARIOUS PLACES . . . LOOK UP AND LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, BECAUSE YOUR REDEMPTION DRAWS NEAR.**"

**The Powerful Weapon of Prayer**

So the Body of Christ needs to exercise our spiritual weapons, especially the power of prayer. We have been called to fast and pray for God’s will to be done on earth, for Him to deliver us from evil and bring down demonic strongholds (Ephesians 6:10-17; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14; Romans 16:20; Matthew 6:13).

We know His will for mankind is good, and that He wants righteousness and peace to prevail (Luke 2:14; Isaiah 2:1-4; 1 Timothy 2:1-7). This is why we wage war in the unseen world with our prayers to God.

**The Same Evil Targets Israel**

The spiritual rulers of darkness manifest in real time, space, and history. These evil forces are influencing today’s terrorist groups to ruthlessly kill Christians, and not to stop there but to target Israel and the Jewish people too!

Israel has been on the front-line of the battle against radical jihadists for many decades now, targeted by the exact same evil principalities as the region’s Christians! Israel is actually fighting a spiritual battle against evil when protecting its own citizens.

It is truly part of our spiritual warfare “against the rulers of the darkness of this age” both to raise our voices on behalf of persecuted Christians under the thumb of radical Islam, and to stand alongside Israelis in their fight against this same evil.

**Taking Responsibility**

Israelis refuse to give in to these wicked powers or let their destiny slip into evil hands. They boldly keep their destiny in their own hands, which upsets the international community. Many world leaders see Israel endangering other nations by boldly resisting evil.

But, if leaders, especially in the West, refuse to accept their responsibility and do not stand alongside Israel, they will soon experience the same spiritual evil invading their lands. This violent spirit seeks to physically attack Christians and Jews in many nations - Europe and the United States included. It wants to suppress our freedom to share God’s word while also silencing any honest evaluation of Islam.

**Hope for the Entire World**

But, I can see hope in the midst of all this, if the Church worldwide will catch the wind of the Spirit, repent, and allow God to change us from within.

Will we keep the glorious destiny of the Church in her own hands and not yield to the forces of darkness? Will we guard the treasures, spiritual weapons, and gifts entrusted to the Church? And will we keep resisting Satan to the very end (2 Timothy 1:14; James 4:7; Matthew 4:1-11)?

This kind of Church will infuse hope to Israel and to all nations in our common struggle against evil!
The world has been shocked beyond words by the inhuman carnage and brutality being exhibited by the Islamic State terror militia in Iraq over recent months, especially against the ancient Iraqi Christian community and other minorities.

The ISIS jihadists are carrying out public beheadings, hangings, and crucifixions on a daily basis all across northwest Iraq, just like in eastern Syria. In village after village, its militia have swept in and executed the men, raped the women, and enslaved the children. These beastly tactics have led some world leaders, despite widespread war fatigue from the prolonged conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, to urge that the West re-engage militarily in Iraq.

Sadly, few of these global statesmen are citing the plight of the embattled Christians of the Middle East as sufficient cause for standing up to the jihadists. They are more worried about terror finding its way to Western shores, as it did in 9/11, or the London Underground bombings. The region’s Christians have largely been abandoned, just as they have been for decades.

The Rise and Retreat of Middle Eastern Christianity

Centuries ago, the Middle East was once the cradle of Christianity, with roughly half its population adhering to the new faith. But this all changed when the Islamic conquest of the seventh century engulfed the Middle East and North Africa, and many Christians were forced to convert, submit, die, or flee. Entire Christian communities were decimated, and the remnants forced into dhimmi status and payment of the humiliating jizya head tax for protection.

Nonetheless, many Christians in Arab lands clung to their faith and managed to survive under Muslim dominance. Even as recently as one hundred years ago, they still made up nearly 20% of the overall population of the Middle East. But, with the break-up of the Ottoman Empire and the many conflicts plaguing the region ever since, these proud, historic churches have been reduced to tiny remnants.

The outbreak of the Arab Spring accelerated this Christian exodus once again in recent years. As mass uprisings toppled repressive dictators throughout the region, radical Islamists stepped into the power vacuum and unleashed a brutal wave of persecution against vulnerable Christian communities. Wherever radical Muslims seized power, they burned and bombed churches, provoked pogroms against Christian neighbourhoods, and abducted Christian women to force them into marrying Muslim men.

Several recent studies have confirmed that although Christianity is the largest religion in the world at 2.2 billion adherents,
An Iraqi Christian woman distraught over losing everything in the Islamic State terror militia’s bloody sweep through northwest Iraq. (AP)
Christians are also the most widely persecuted religious group today, with the worst persecution occurring in Muslim lands. And, the most acute situation for Middle East Christians right now is occurring in Syria and Iraq.

Chaldean Cauldron
Most Christians in Iraq and Syria belong to the ancient Assyrian or Chaldean churches and trace their spiritual heritage all the way back to the prophet Jonah, whose preaching in Nineveh some 700 years before Christ led to widespread repentance and belief in the God of the Bible. This made them receptive to the Gospel when the Apostles Peter and Thomas showed up in the same region in the first century and founded these churches. Before long, the Chaldean bishopric oversaw a vast network of thousands of churches that stretched all the way from Turkey to China.

But much of this huge flock was lost in the upheavals of the Islamic invasion and other conquests of the region down through the centuries. In modern times, the slow, painful destruction of Chaldean Christianity has continued.

When the Great Powers divided up the former Ottoman holdings in Arab lands after World War I, many of the emerging Arab states began persecuting and chasing out the native Christians. According to a doctoral dissertation entitled, "The Death of a Nation," published in 1968, the Christians of Iraq were pushed out into Syria, but Syria did not want them and chased them back into Iraq. Amid the chaos and bloodshed, over 1.5 million Assyrian Christians were killed.

This tragedy began repeating itself when the US-led invasion of Iraq toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003. As that conflict morphed into a jihad against the "Crusader West," al-Qaeda in Iraq gave Christians a deadline for agreeing to revive the jizya tax. When they refused, al-Qaeda simultaneously bombed five churches on one Sunday alone.

The Islamic extremists were quite clear that their goal was to drive all Christians out of Iraq, and indeed the Iraqi Christian population has plummeted from around 1.5 million to as low as 300,000 over the past decade. Many escaped into neighboring Syria, since they speak the same language, often have family ties, and both follow the ancient liturgy and customs of the Assyrian Orthodox and Coptic churches.

Before long the Syrian civil war erupted and many Sunni jihadists joined the uprising against the Assad regime. One of their main targets was the Christian community, which had historically aligned with the minority Alawite rulers against the Sunni Arab majority in Syria. Meanwhile, Assad loyalists also began attacking the Christians for not taking up arms to defend the regime.

Caught between the two warring sides, the Christians inside Syria have faced horrendous conditions over recent years. Many of those who fled Iraq for Syria are now watching the atrocities back in Iraq and wondering where else they can go.

As ISIS forces in Syria have flooded across the porous border into Iraq this summer, they have gobbled up large swaths of the Sunni-dominated provinces in northwest Iraq. One region they targeted in recent weeks was the Nineveh Plain, along the Tigris River above Mosul.

This plateau was the last safe haven for Chaldean Christians left in the country, and the original homeland of this God-fearing people for the past 2,700 years. Yet in just a month's time, all its traditionally Christian towns have been emptied and the last 300,000 Christians left in the region have fled for their lives. Many have sought refuge in the Kurdish autonomous region to the east, while others now languish in refugee camps in Jordan and Turkey.

Enforcing 'Pure' Islam
These tragic developments evidence a systematic campaign by the Islamic State and other radical Muslim factions to deliberately cleanse the region of its native Christian population, just as the Jewish minorities were forcibly uprooted following Israel's rebirth in 1948. The reason these Muslim "purists" are driving out Christians lies within certain uniquely ruthless tenets of Islam they seek to enforce.

First, the Islamic faith is very territorial and divides the world into Dar al-Harb and Dar al-Islam, or the "House of War" versus the "House of Peace." This doctrine maintains that any territory which Muslims have conquered and subjected to shari'a law maintains that any territory which Muslims have conquered and subjected to shari'a law must be kept that way for future Muslim generations, while the rest of the world is a place of war (jihad) still to be conquered for Islam.

Secondly, shari'a law demands that Muslims must never befriend Christians or Jews, creating an inherent hostility towards these minority communities. This command comes straight from the Koran and thus can never be compromised.

For centuries, Muslims also were taught that because they followed a superior religion, they were a superior people to Christians and Jews and thus had a natural right to
rule over them. In more recent times, it has been hard for many Muslims to give up this claim of superiority in exchange for modern democratic notions of equality and minority rights.

The national rebirth of Israel in 1948 challenged this mind-set of superiority, and did so in an area once subject to shari’a law. For many Muslims, this was a double blow and thus gave rise to a broader Arab rejection of Israel’s existence that remains to this day.

Now, radical Muslim groups like ISIS do not want local Christians thinking they can also gain their freedom. To this end, they are being targeted for conversion, subjugation, eviction, or eradication. Those are the only options, and they originate with none other than Muhammad himself.

In addition, Islam selectively borrows from biblical apocalyptic writings but adds a deadly twist. The Muslim faith teaches that Jesus indeed will return one day, but his mission will be to eradicate the heresy of Christianity and declare Islam as the one true faith and Muhammad as the true prophet. That is, he will come back as the destroyer of every last vestige of Christian belief.

Radical Islamist groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda believe they are just doing Allah’s bidding by wiping out any Christian remnants in Muslim lands. They view this as simply part of their long-term battle against Christians, Jews, and other non-Muslims in order to cleanse the world of infidels and ensure Islam reigns supreme.

The declaring of a “caliphate” by ISIS leader Imam Abu-bakr al-Baghdadi is an important step in their minds towards reaching their ultimate goal of Muslim domination of the world. Thus their threats to extend the rule of the Islamic State into Lebanon and Jordan must be taken seriously.

The Fallacy of Silence
One of the toughest questions to answer these days is why Western Christians are not speaking out more forcefully concerning the plight of our brethren in Muslim lands. This is a question often posed by Jews, who learned the hard lesson of remaining silent during the Holocaust.

Some American Jewish leaders actually contended at the time that demanding more action by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt to stop the Nazi genocide might actually make matters worse for European Jews. This proved a false assumption, and should not be repeated in the case of Middle East Christians. Things could not get any worse for them than what they are suffering under ISIS, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, and many other jihadist movements.

We should listen to our Jewish friends. Silence simply does not work!

We must speak out on their behalf like never before. Please pray for our fellow Christians in the Middle East. And make your voice heard in your own countries that the slaughter and hemorrhaging of these ancient Christian communities must be stopped!

An Iraqi Christian family fled their village on the Nineveh plain recently and found refuge in a church in Irbil, the Kurdish regional capital.
In late May, a young man showed up one afternoon outside the Jewish Museum in Brussels, located on a quiet street in the heart of the Belgian capital. Wearing a baseball cap and a ‘Go-Pro’ camera mounted on his chest, he proceeded to take out a .38 revolver and a Kalashnikov rifle from a satchel and fire upon people at the museum entrance. Within seconds, he had gunned down an Israeli couple, a French woman, and a museum worker, and then fled the scene.

A week later, the trail led police to Mehdi Nemmouche, a 29-year old French-Algerian criminal, who after being released from jail in Paris in 2012 went to Syria to join the ranks of the Islamic State terror militia and recently returned to France thirsting to shed Jewish blood. As in the Toulouse shooting two years ago, the shooter had hoped to film his exploits to boost recruiting. Now awaiting trial back in Brussels, he is believed to be the first European jihadist to volunteer in the Syrian war and then returned to kill in Europe.

But with ISIS now rampaging across Iraq and slaughtering everyone in its path, European leaders are worried there will be many more like Nemmouche. Officials in Britain, for instance, are concerned that twice as many British Muslims have opted to join ISIS in Iraq and Syria than are currently serving in the British army.

Add to this growing threat the dramatic surge in anti-Semitic incidents across Europe, in the wake of Israel’s efforts to end Hamas rocket attacks from Gaza over recent months, and we are looking at a very volatile mix.

The Anti-Defamation League just released a study which found a sudden spike in the number of anti-Semitic incidents worldwide, particularly in Europe, since the beginning of the IDF’s Operation Protective Edge in Gaza in early July. This included physical assaults on Jews, threats and intimidation, damage to Jewish synagogues, homes and businesses, public hate speech, declarations invoking blood libels and Nazi atrocities, and anti-Semitic political cartoons. The majority of the incidents occurred throughout Europe, but others were reported in South Africa, Australia, Turkey, Canada, Morocco and several Latin American countries.
Though many involved said they were only expressing anger at Israel, in most incidents this quickly lapsed into hatred of Jews in general. Protesters often chanted “death to the Jews” and held up signs comparing Zionism to Nazism.

In Paris, several synagogues have come under siege by violent mobs. Near the Peace Palace in The Hague, Muslim crowds have repeatedly held demonstrations featuring the black flags of ISIS and calls for Jews to “remember Khybar” - a reference to the massacre of Jews in the Arabian town carried out with Muhammad’s assent.

In Frankfurt, a rabbi received a phone call threatening to kill 30 of the city’s Jews. Elsewhere, a rabbi was assaulted in Casablanca in retribution for the Gaza campaign, breaking his nose and ribs. In far-off Australia, hooligans jumped on a bus filled with Jewish students and threatened them harm.

Meanwhile, both Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan joined Hollywood stars in accusing Israel of committing “genocide” in Gaza.

Given this decrepit state of affairs, it is no wonder that aliyah to Israel is up over recent months, including a rise of 162% from Western Europe. This includes a 250% increase from France compared to last year. In fact, as many as 5,000 French Jews - a full one percent of the community - are expected to move to Israel this year alone. That is an unprecedented figure for a Western country.

Jewish Agency chairman Natan Sharansky even claimed that Israel has taken in more Jewish immigrants than Hamas rockets over recent months.

Many of these newcomers to Israel are fleeing from Ukraine, where the civil war against Russian separatists in the east of the country has intensified. Over recent months, this conflict has turned into brutal urban warfare between Ukrainian troops and pro-Russian forces, emptying entire cities of their populations. This includes thousands of Jews now living in refugee camps in western Ukraine, many of whom are deciding to move to Israel. Aliyah from the Ukraine has doubled so far this year.

Yet many elderly Jews remain shut up in their homes in eastern Ukraine. There is no power or running water in many towns, the trains have stopped operating, shooting and mortar fire can be heard all around, and competing militias have set up roadblocks everywhere demanding bribes for safe passage.

Nonetheless, efforts are underway to send in rescue teams to bring many isolated and internally displaced Jews in the Ukraine out to safety. The Jewish Agency has asked the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem to help fund these rescue efforts, which will eventually lead to their aliyah to Israel.

Understanding that they will need to be brought out to safety while immigration authorities are expediting their paperwork, the ICEJ has already handed over enough funds to assist several hundred Jews awaiting flights to Israel. We also have committed to help fund this most urgent humanitarian mission to rescue trapped Jews still in eastern Ukraine, but we need your gifts to make it happen.

Meantime, the next set of ICEJ-sponsored aliyah flights for the Bnei Menashe community in northeast India is expected in November. This, too, is a great humanitarian effort to bring home an ancient Israelite tribe that has been waiting 2,700 years to return to the land of their forefathers.
After 50 days of hostilities and a dozen failed truces, there was something different about ceasefire number 13. As Gazans flooded the streets to set off fireworks and celebrate “victory” in this summer’s war with Israel, uniformed Hamas gunmen also came out of hiding to fire their weapons into the air.

This sight had been missing in all the earlier pauses in fighting. From day one of this war, the third Hamas rocket war with Israel in the past six years, Hamas fighters had mysteriously disappeared from view. Many hunkered away in the vast honeycomb of terror tunnels underneath Gaza’s urban sprawl, while others shed their fatigues to blend in with the civilian population, all to avoid detection by the dozens of Israeli “eyes” hovering overhead.

As an uneasy calm settled over the land in late August, both sides claimed that they had come out on top. But it may take some time to figure out who really won - if anyone.

After getting drawn into eerily similar conflicts with Hamas in 2009 and 2012, Israeli leaders faced a stark choice this time. They could launch another limited incursion into Gaza and perhaps face yet another escalation of rocket fire a couple
In June 2014, ISIS had at least 4,000 fighters in its ranks in Iraq
destroyed, while up to 100,000 Gazans and buildings linked to Hamas were
among the estimated 2,100 military casualties in Gaza, with another 10,000
were left homeless. The destruction inside the crowded strip of land is said
to be far worse than any previous war. Hamas also wasted much time and
resources on digging miles of terror tunnels that are now all collapsed. Plus
its arsenal of rockets is severely depleted.

On the Israeli side, the death toll included 66 soldiers and six civilians.
And although the damage was limited, Hamas did manage to launch nearly
4,000 rockets and mortars into Israel despite the IDF’s vigilant efforts to
suppress the missile fire. Meanwhile, life became intolerable for those living
closer to Gaza, while Israelis nationwide will need time to regain their sense of
security.

Still, the tally sheet from this war will not be complete until the truce talks resume
back in Cairo to discuss all the issues left unresolved by the conflict. For Israel, the
game plan now will be to deny Hamas victory by not conceding any diplomatic
gains going forward.

From the very start, Hamas and Israel exchanged blows while also engaging in
indirect talks to end the fighting through Egyptian mediation. Hamas initially
tabled a list of steep demands to halt the rocket fire: lifting of the blockade on
Gaza and the free flow of goods, release of Hamas operatives re-arrested by Israel
recently, allowing an airport and seaport in Gaza, and paying the salaries of Hamas
employees. Israel countered by calling for an unconditional halt to the rocket
barrages and for Gaza to be disarmed.

In a new twist, Egypt sided with Israel, prompting Hamas to bring in its allies
Turkey and Qatar. The US apparently assumed that Turkey and Qatar were more able to control
Hamas. But after the Islamist terror militia either rejected or breached 12 ceasefires over the course of the conflict, it was clear they answer to no one and
cannot be trusted. Even the Palestinian Authority, which signed a unity pact with
Hamas just months ago, learned that all the while its main rival was plotting Fatah’s overthrow in the West Bank.

Meantime, Israeli leaders are war frustrated that the world does not treat Hamas the same as al-Qaeda and the ruthless Islamic State in Iraq. The
foreign media in particular gave Hamas “equal time” and often slanted coverage, which they would never do with these other radical Muslim terrorists despite the
fact they all have little regard for human life and violently seek a global caliphate.

But there is also reason for optimism in that Egypt and Saudi Arabia have shown a willingness to cooperate with Israel in standing against both the Iranian threat
and the Sunni jihadist militias. Netanyahu seems to have held back on defeating
Hamas, thereby avoiding even greater Palestinian casualties in Gaza, in order to
cement this new regional alignment in hopes it will pay higher dividends in the future.

The first order of business will be teaming with Cairo to prevent Hamas from rearming. Achieve that and Israel will indeed have won the third Gaza war.
BLESSING THE BEDOUIN
ICEJ PROVIDES BOMB SHELTER, AND SUMMER CAMPS TO ARAB VILLAGES

BY BIRTE SCHOLZ

Southern Israel is the most vulnerable area to Hamas rocket fire from Gaza, and this summer a number of Bedouin villages in the Negev came under repeated shelling. One Arab man was eventually killed, and two young sisters were severely injured from these missile attacks. When the media turned its attention to this community, facts emerged that these Bedouin towns in the Negev, many of them “unrecognized” villages, were without a single bomb shelter.

So the ICEJ decided to deliver a mobile bomb shelter—one of ten donated to various locations in recent weeks—to the village of Umm Batim, near Beersheva, which had recently suffered 11 rocket strikes from Gaza. After consulting with village leaders, it was decided the best place for the shelter would be the local medical clinic, which was forced to close during the recent fighting. The clinic was deemed essential to helping the community of 4,500 residents make it through the recent conflict and could re-open once the shelter was delivered.

Because it was the first bomb shelter in a Bedouin village in the Negev, the Israeli media showed up in force to cover the story. Rev. Juha Ketola, the ICEJ’s International Director, was on hand for the delivery. He was able to tell the press that the Christian Embassy has provided 50 such portable bomb shelters to embattled communities in the region over the past seven years, and was proud to contribute the first one to protect Israeli Bedouin.

"I want to thank the Christian Embassy that you gave us this shelter," added Attia, a village elder. "It is a symbolic beginning and we appreciate it a lot. We hope that others will follow your example. Always when I see good people my heart opens."

A few weeks later, an ICEJ AID team returned to the area to visit an ICEJ summer camp sponsored for Bedouin children in the nearby village of Khirbat Al-Wattan. The four-day youth camp offered games and activities for separate groups of boys and girls, including several water slides brought in and set up especially for the camp. Additionally, the children were entertained by art projects, actors, clowns, and a lot more fun and play.

"The camp is a great success! All the kids are happy," said Ziad, a teacher and camp coordinator.

When word got around about the rare summer camp for area Bedouin youths, the number of students grew each day from 90 children at first to 136 on the final day.

"We could not send them away," said Ziad. "Many of these children are from large families with eight, nine children who are suffering from the Gaza conflict. They don’t have a lot to do during summer vacation. Thank you from my heart to each Christian who gave!"

One 14 year-old boy brought all six of his younger siblings to the camp and said it not only was fun, but inspired him to become a teacher like Ziad.
August 26, 2014

Dear Friends,

Over the past two months, since the kidnapping and murder of our three teenagers, and as Israel has endured terrorist attacks from the air, sea and underground, the support of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has been a source of strength and encouragement for the citizens of Israel and the soldiers defending them.

I take this opportunity to thank the Embassy for your friendship and generosity throughout Operation Protective Edge, and for your ongoing efforts, in Israel and around the world, on behalf of the people and State of Israel.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Netanyahu

Dr. Jürgen Bühler, Executive Director
International Christian Embassy Jerusalem
20 Rachel Imenu St.
Jerusalem 91010

Jerusalem, Israel
ICEJ-FINLAND HOSTS ISRAEL CELEBRATIONS

ICEJ-Finland Branch Director, Kari Niemi, once again hosted a series of special Israel celebrations this summer to share about Israel and God’s plans concerning her as a nation.

One meeting was part of a larger evangelical conference held in the city arena in Seinäjoki, which drew several thousand people from all over Finland. In the past, this annual conference has featured such well-known international speakers as Steven Hill, Reinhard Bonnke, John Bevere, and Tom Tenney, among others. This year’s guest speaker was evangelist Suzette Hattingh, who also serves on the ICEJ’s international Advisory Board.

During this national conference each year, one service is always reserved for the Christian Embassy to present teachings on Israel. This summer, ICEJ International Director Rev. Juha Ketola delivered the message, together with former European Parliament Member Hannu Takkula.

Rev. Ketola and Kari Niemi also spoke at ICEJ-Finland’s annual Israel Celebration Day, held recently in Uurainen, in central Finland. At the closing service, Ms. Arezoo Hersel, Israel's Deputy Ambassador to Finland, also greeted the people.

ICEJ-SWITZERLAND MARKS 30TH ANNIVERSARY

The ICEJ’s Swiss branch recently celebrated its 30th anniversary with a conference in the scenic city of Interlaken attended by hundreds of Christians. ICEJ-Switzerland Branch Director Hansjorg Bischof, who founded the branch in 1984, hosted the event. The Christian Embassy’s current and former Executive Directors, Dr. Jürgen Bühler and Rev. Malcolm Hedding, served as the main speakers. Over the past three decades, ICEJ-Switzerland has grown into one of the ministry’s strongest branches in Europe, funding numerous Aliyah efforts to bring Jews home and a variety of humanitarian projects in Israel.

RECENT OUTREACH IN USA

In July, ICEJ Media and Public Relations Director David Parsons spent two weeks in North Carolina and Virginia speaking about Israel on behalf of the ICEJ-USA branch. The itinerary included 11 speaking engagements in churches and Bible colleges across the two states. The services were well-attended, as interest in Israel was especially high due to the on-going conflict in Gaza. Parsons gave briefings on the recent clashes with Hamas, but also brought a “good report” on how God is blessing and showing favor to Israel despite all the challenges and threats the nation faces.
At the Feast of Tabernacles each year, the ICEJ honors a Christian leader who has demonstrated a lifetime of work and achievements in supporting and defending Israel. The annual Nehemiah Award recognizes individuals who have made an indelible impact on Israel, their nation, and the world on behalf of the restoration of the Jewish state and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Award winners are much like the biblical figure Nehemiah who declared, “Let us rise up and build,” over the city long ago (Nehemiah 2:18).

This year’s Nehemiah Award winner, Leif A. Wellerop, has been a central figure in the global leadership of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem over the past three decades, an energetic advocate for Israel, and an influential pro-Israel voice in his native Norway and across Europe.

Now 75, Wellerop has a professional background in journalism and public relations. After starting out as a newspaper reporter, Leif worked for 20 years as a public relations consultant. He also became active in Norwegian politics and the pro-life movement in his nation.

When the International Christian Embassy was founded in 1980, Wellerop was an ICEJ representative from the start and has been the full-time national director of ICEJ-Norway since 1987. Under his leadership, ICEJ-Norway became one of the most active and successful national branches of the movement worldwide.

For over 30 years Wellerop has been a prominent pro-Israel Christian figure within Norway, and is recognized by government leaders and the national media as a strong advocate for the Jewish state. He helped pioneer the Oslo Summit, a major bi-annual gathering of top political and community leaders now held ahead of Norway’s national elections every two years to debate domestic and foreign policy issues, and in particular, the nation’s policies on the Middle East.

He also has spearheaded the Norwegian Christian community’s unique generosity towards meeting social needs in Israel. For instance, ICEJ-Norway has sponsored flights for thousands of Jews making aliyah and funded numerous humanitarian projects throughout Israel, including many programs aimed at assisting the Arab sector and encouraging Jewish-Arab reconciliation.

Wellerop also has served on the ICEJ’s international Board of Trustees, including ten years as its chairman. Thus, Leif not only has had a tremendous impact on Norway’s lively national debate over Israel-related issues, but also on the direction and growth of the Christian Embassy worldwide.

In June 2014, Leif formally handed over the reins of ICEJ-Norway to his deputy, Rev. Dag Øyvind Juliussen, who has been working with the Norwegian branch since 1996.

Now retired but still active in the ministry, Leif has been married to his wife, Gunvor, for 53 years. Together, they have four children, 10 grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Besides his pro-Israel activities, Wellerop is also the author of two books on Christianity which are used in primary schools across Norway.

The unique contributions of Leif Wellerop to the work and ministry of the Christian Embassy over recent decades have been enormous. He has helped to provide vision and stability to the movement, which has enabled us to grow in areas far beyond the borders of his native Norway. His imprint is especially reflected in the many humanitarian projects that touched many lives all across Israel. And the ICEJ is grateful that he still has a fire for Zion and will continue his activism on Israel’s behalf in the years ahead.

Based on his lifetime of achievements in inspiring Christians to stand with Israel, the ICEJ is pleased to honor Leif A. Wellerop with the Nehemiah Award for 2014.
Despite numerous wars, the necessity of huge defense budgets, and the costs of absorbing scores of new and often poor immigrants, Israel today is a significant competitor in the global market.

Lacking natural resources and with less than a million citizens at its beginning, the world was uncertain whether Israel would survive back in 1948. Over six decades later, this small democratic country in the turbulent Middle East has become an economic miracle and an inspiration to much of the world.

Israel boasts one of the most highly educated societies in the world, with more doctors, scientists, and engineers per capita than most other nations on earth. This great “asset” of people power has prompted phenomenal growth in the fields of hi-tech, telecommunications, and biotechnology, along with advances in medical equipment, information technology, Web security, environmental quality, and water preservation.

Today, Israel is known as the “Start-Up Nation,” and numerous global companies are investing in research and development branches there to take advantage of its innovative work force. Israel is second only to the United States in implementing new technologies worldwide, and has more companies listed on NASDAQ than any other foreign country.

In recent years, Israel quickly overcame the global market meltdown of 2008. She also recovered from four armed conflicts with Arab adversaries over the past eight years. Still, the Israeli economy faces many challenges.

One of the most serious tests of Israel’s economic viability today is the Palestinian-led effort to boycott, divest, and sanction Israel – otherwise known as the BDS campaign. Launched in earnest in 2005, its ultimate goal is the elimination of Israel.

The BDS movement has received much attention in the media, but its economic impact has been minimal so far. The European Union, looked to for leadership on the issue, does not support the boycott campaign. Instead, the Europeans are only encouraging the labelling of Israeli products made over the pre-1967 Green Line.

Israel’s Christian friends need to stand against all of these attempts to delegitimize Israel and strangle her economy. Yet, beyond countering the boycott campaign or the movement to label settlement products, we can do the right thing by purchasing Israeli products as a pro-active way of supporting the Jewish state.

To encourage Christians to purchase Israeli products, the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem will be publishing its first annual *Israel Buyer’s Guide* in coming months. This booklet will assist you in very practical ways to purchase Israeli products and services available in many countries worldwide.

The *Israel Buyer’s Guide* will enable you to enjoy quality Israeli foods, fashion, cosmetics, consumer goods, hi-tech devices, and information apps. And it will also allow you to support Israeli businesses, bolster its export and trade balance, and undergird Israeli jobs.

The ICEJ will be publishing and distributing the *Israel Buyer’s Guide* in cooperation with the Israel Manufacturers and Trade Association and the Israel Export Institute.

Be looking for more information on the *Israel Buyer’s Guide* and how you can get your copy at www.icejusa.org
ICEJ SPONSORS JERUSALEM FOOTBALL TEAM
BY AARON HECHT

The International Christian Embassy Jerusalem has entered the world of Israeli sports by partnering with Sar-El Tours to sponsor the Jerusalem Kings, one of 11 teams in Israel’s gridiron football league.

Founded in 2007, the Jerusalem Kings have always attracted an eclectic blend of players and coaches from the Israeli capital’s social, religious, and ethnic milieu: from native-born ‘sabras’ to Christian volunteer workers, to university and yeshiva students, as well as, Arab Christians and Muslims, and even employees of the UN and the American consulate.

But when they come together on the football field, all those differences are set aside and the Jerusalem Kings become a team - and more than that, a family.

“We’ve had guys from all walks of life, and we pull together to help each other out,” said sixth year player Mike Gondelman, an addictions counsellor who played football at the University of Alabama before making aliyah. “People get closer to God on this team. If they come to us with problems, often they get sober, they get clean, and they get their lives together.”

Mike explained that when the team was looking for a name, a local rabbi suggested the “Kings” to connote royalty, and that has characterized them ever since.

“That tells us how we’re supposed to act, on and off the field,” said Mike. “We take a personal responsibility to give it our all, so that after the game, we can look in the mirror and say we acted like royalty. ‘Once a King, always a King’ is our motto.”

Shaked Aharon Rosenthal, another veteran of the Kings, first tried out when he was already 30 years old with a wife, two children, and a business to run.

"OVER THE YEARS, WE HAVE HAD JEWS, CHRISTIANS, AND MUSLIMS PLAYING ALONGSIDE EACH OTHER. DURING THIS TIME, I SAW HOW THE FOOTBALL FIELD WAS A WAY FOR GUYS TO FIND COMMON GROUND AND OVERLOOK THE POLITICAL BAGGAGE AND STEREOTYPES THAT CAUSE SO MUCH CONFLICT IN ISRAEL."

"I was looking for a way to lose some weight and get in shape. I didn’t know much about the game but what I discovered was the most intelligent and intense sport I ever played,” said the Orthodox Jew. “The Kings quickly became my second family.”

“Over the years, we have had Jews, Christians, and Muslims playing alongside each other. During this time, I saw how the football field was a way for guys to find common ground and overlook the political baggage and stereotypes that cause so much conflict in Israel.”

The Israel Football League has plans to rapidly expand, which means that the Kings and other IFL clubs will need more money for equipment, uniforms, and other needs.
US RALLIES
Amid mounting criticism of Israel during the recent Gaza conflict, the US Branch of the ICEJ was able to muster public support for Israel at rallies held in a number of cities. Most of these rallies were in partnership with local Jewish communities and it brought great encouragement to them to know that Christians were standing with Israel. The ICEJ participated in rallies in Miami, FL; two in Boca Raton, FL; Atlanta, GA; and in Nashville, TN where Malcolm Hedding, former ICEJ Executive Director spoke.

BRIEFING FOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS
Another way the US Branch was able to assist Israel was by organizing a high-level briefing for some of America’s major Christian leaders. Israel’s Deputy Head of Mission, Mr. Reuven Azar, at the Embassy of Israel in Washington, DC conducted the conference call briefing. Over 40 Christian leaders from some of the largest churches, organizations, and media outlets in the USA participated in the call.

STANDING AGAINST RISING ANTI-SEMITISM
Anti-Israel demonstrations and protests during the recent war of defense against Hamas rockets fostered and ignited a wave of anti-Semitic acts around the world—even in the United States. South Florida, home to the second largest Jewish community in the nation, experienced a pro-Hamas demonstration, as well as a number of incidents of anti-Semitic vandalism such as swastikas painted on synagogues and defaced cars parked near them. Most of the vandalism happened in a largely Jewish neighborhood in north Miami Beach, where a visiting Rabbi was murdered on his way to synagogue on Shabbat raising suspicions as to whether it too may have been a hate crime.

In response, the US Branch of the ICEJ in partnership with the Broward County Pastors Network issued a statement that was signed by some 20 Church networks and organizations voicing condemnation for these anti-Semitic acts and expressing support for the local Jewish community. The local Jewish Federation was so moved by this demonstration of solidarity that the statement was distributed to all local synagogues so they could read it to their congregants over the High Holidays.

The ICEJ also provided resources to the churches in the Broward County Pastors Network to enable them to educate their congregants about the issue during the Jewish holidays.

UNDERSTANDING ISRAEL SEMINAR
Pastor John Small, ICEJ-USA coordinator of pastoral relations, and Susan Michael, ICEJ-USA Director, presented the Understanding Israel Seminar at Church of All Nations in Boca Raton, FL on August 23. Boca Raton is the only city in the USA with a majority Jewish population. The multi-cultural church is very pro-Israel but found the teaching a great benefit to their understanding of the issues surrounding Israel.
ENVISION 2015
PASTORS & LEADERS CONFERENCE

26 - 29 JANUARY 2015

Join pastors and church leaders from around the globe for a focused time of teaching and ministry in the great city of Jerusalem. Envision 2015 will offer an inside perspective on Israel and the Middle East from ICEJ and local ministry leaders who are there on the front lines. Don't miss this opportunity!

TO REGISTER OR LEARN MORE, VISIT: HTTP://ENVISION.ICEJ.ORG
We now have over 90 Isaiah 62 prayer groups in 30 states in the USA. Our goal is to have groups in all 50 states. Get your state on the map as one praying for Israel! To start an Isaiah 62 prayer group, or register your existing group with us, please contact isaiah62@icejusa.org

Help us get all 50 states praying for Israel!